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We would call the attention of the public generally, and especially of all persons immediately interested in Railroads, to the Circular to the Presidents of Railroad Companies from the committee of the meeting held in this city on the 3d inst. We understand that the meeting adjourned until the first Tuesday in March, that the great convention to be held at New Orleans on the first Monday in January may act upon the proposed modification of the laws regulating mail contracts. It is hoped that the adjourned meeting will be fully attended, and that Railroad RAILROAD CONVENTION. ing will be fully attended, and that Railroad Companies who cannot conveniently send delegates will authorize their members of Congress or some one else to represent them.

[Circular.]
WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 10, 1851.
Sir: By the enclosed proceedings of a meeting held in this city on the 3d instant, it was made the duty of the undersigned as a committee to correspond with the second values of the correspond with the second values. made the duty of the undersigned as commit-tee to correspond with the several railroad com-panies in the United States, and to report to an adjourned meeting, to be held in this city on the first Tuesday in March next, to consider a prop-osition to petition Congress for a change in the law regulating mail contracts, so as to enable the Post Office Department to deliver to railroad companies United States five per cent. coupon bonds, upon permanent contracts for carrying the mail, to an amount the interest upon which, at five per cent., would be equal to the payments to be made under existing laws; and they therefore respectfully call the attention of your company to the subject, and invite your co-operation. They greatly prefer that you should send delegates to the adjourned meeting; for the opinions expressed by a convention of practical men, representing so much wealth, enterprise, and intelligence, will command, as they will deserve, the confidence and respect of Congress, and thus promote the adop-tion of such details as may be agreed upon in convention; but if it should not be convenient to send delegates, we would ask your company to submit, through us, your wishes and opinions upon the main proposition, and upon the details connected therewith.

connected therewith.

It is well known that many persons are opposed to internal improvements by the general government—some denying the power of Congress to make appropriations for that object; others fearing that the exercise of such power would lead to combinations resulting in partial and unjust legislation. It will be seen that the proposition under consideration is free from these objections. It asks no appropriation of money in aid of the construction of railroads. The contracts will be restricted to the service which the several railroad companies are in condition to execute when

the payments are made. It is true that the proposed modification of the laws regulating mail contracts will give similar payments pro rata, as new roads are made and as old ones are extended, and will so far increase the credit and resources of railroad companies. The same effect, although to a less extent, results from existing laws, and surely it cannot be urged as a valid objection to the proposed change that it will aid in the extension of the railroad We claim as a merit, that the proposed modification will aid in extending the system by giving greater value to railroad investments. Under existing laws contracts are made for four years, and the payments are continued, if not increased ad infinitum. Under the proposed modification the contracts will be made, giving the United States the perpetual use of railroads; and the rate of compensation is so reduced that, at the end of thirty-three years, the payments will cease, and the department will forever thereafter

have the use of such railroad free of all charge. s objected that old routes may be superseded by new ones, and the present service diminished as to render it inexpedient to make permanent contracts at the rates proposed. It has also been objected that railroads now in use may be discontinued, and that such railroad companies cannot protect the department from loss. We answer these objections by assuming that the contracts will be made by a board appointed for that purpose, and that no contracts will be given unless that board be fully satisfied that mail service adequate to the payments will be amply secured to the United States.

We desire to obtain the views of your company upon these and all other matters of detail, and respectfully ask of you to furnish us such statistics as will enable us to submit to the convention and to Congress a statement showing the comparative increase or diminution, as the case may e, of the mail service performed by your company—the past, and probable future increase of the weight of mails carried over the route of your road. And in this connexion we wish to earn what, in your opinion, will be the probable increased weight of the mails, if newspapers and

periodicals are sent free of postage.

We wish you also to state what is the present current price of your shares, what rate of diviyour company now pay, and what dividend could you pay under a contract such as we

The committee venture to invite the co-opera tion of the railroad convention to be held in New Orleans on the first Monday of January, and that the newspapers in the South and West will urge upon all those who are interested in railroads or n the extension of the system a favorable consideration of the measure proposed, and the ne-cessity of prompt and efficient co-operation. In

DUFF GREEN, Chairman.

Proceedings of a Meeting held in Washington City on the 3d December, 1851.

At a meeting of gentlemen, assembled, at the request of Gen. Duff Green, to consider a project for modifying the existing laws regulating the letting of mails to railroad corporations—

Gen. Morton, of Florida, was chosen president, and Albert Smith, of Maine, secretary.

Gen. Morton, of Florida, was chosen president, and Albert Smith, of Malne, secretary.

The meeting was addressed by Gen. Green in explanation of his proposition; after which, a desultory conversation was held by all the gentlemen present, and the following resolution was adopted:

"Resolved, That a committee of five be appointed, with authority to correspond with the several railroad companies in the United States upon the subject of an application to Congress for a change in the mode of compensation for transporting the mails on railroads, and to digest a plan, to be submitted to a meeting to be hereafter convened by the said committee."

De audittiee to a meeting of the said committee."

Gen. Duff Green, Mr. Blunt, of Florida, Albert Smith, of Maine, Robert H. Gallaher and Col. Fontaine, of Virginia, were chosen said committee.

Voted, that the meeting be adjourned.

ALBERT SMITH, Secretary.

Office of Correspondence, WASHINGTON CITY.

A LL persons having business in the city of Washington are informed that the undersigned has established here an OFFICE OF CORRESPONDENCE, for the purpose of giving any information desired by any person in any part of the world. No business, whether public or private, if of an honorable character, will be excluded from the correspondence of this office. Persons wishing to know how to proceed in any business they may have before Congress, in the public offices, &c., will be discreetly advised; and where professional or other aid is necessary, the best will be procured or donal or other aid is necessary, the best will be procured or

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Every letter of inquiry must contain a fee of five dollars. which will generally be the only remuneration required but should it not compensate for the service to be rendered the proper amount will be stated in a satisfactory letter i

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jan 14—tr [Wash. News.]

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99 Arch street, Philadelphia, begs to announce his re
turn to this city for a few days. The number and impot tance of the cases under his care, on his recent visit, and the
gratifying amount of success which attended his treatment
have induced him to expedite his return. His stay her will depend much upon circumstances; and it will be a visable for those who wish to consult him to make an earl call. Residence over Myer's Drygoods store, between 9t and 10th streets, Pennsylvania avenue. Consultation an examination fee. 81.

nation fee, \$1. OFFICE OF CORRESPONDENCE, A letter on any business, addressed to this office, and eclosing a fee of free dollars, will procure a satisfactory reply References.—R. Wallach, U. S. Marshal; W. Lenox Mayor; Jo. Gales, of the "Intelligencer;" R. W. Lathan Banker. Address T. C. CONNOLLY.

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## AMERICAN TELEGRAPH

From the Youth's Magazine. THE CROP OF ACORNS

BY LYDIA H. SIGOURNEY. There came a man, in days of old, To hire a piece of land for gold, And urged his suit in accents meek, "One crop alone is all I seek; That harvest o'er, my claim I yield, And to its lord resign the field."

The owner some misgivings felt, And coldly with the stranger dealt, But found his last objection fail, And honeyed eloquence prevail, So took the proffered price in hand, And for one crop leased out the land.

The wily tenant sneered with pride. And sowed the spot with acorns wide; At first like tiny shoots they grew, Then broad and wide their branches threw But long before those oaks sublime. Aspiring, reached their forest prime, The cheated landlord mouldering lay, Forgotten, with his kindred clay.

O ye, whose years unfolding fair, Are fresh with youth, and free from care, Should vice or indolence desire The garden of your souls to hire. No parley hold-reject the suit, Nor let one seed the soil pollute.

My child, their first approach beware; With firmness break the insidious snare. Lest, as the acorns grew and throve Into a sun-excluding grove, Thy sins, a dark o'ershadowing tree, Shut out the light of heaven from thee.

From Dickens's Household Words. NEAPOLITAN STATE PRISONERS.

Naples, October 8, 1851. Seeking health here in Naples, and meddling not at all with European politics, I yet find it impossible to walk with an impassive mind among the scenes that are presented daily to

my notice. Once, when I was looking down upon the Bay, enjoying the tranquillity of sunset, a party of condemned prisoners went by; it included men condemned for moral offences, various in hue, and men condemned for political opinions. The wrists of all were bound with cords, so tightly that on many hands the flesh was swollen; and soldiers behind beat, with the butt-end of their muskets, those who lagged. These "condannati" were tried men, sentenced

to a banishment of six or ten years. The kingdom of the Two Sicilies, not having any colonies, can of course banish its prisoners only to different districts in the Neapolitan dominions, and especially distributes them among the islands of the coast. The prisoners are of two classes: those who have been tried and condemned, the condannati, and those who. having been tried and acquitted, are retained in prison; or those who are imprisoned before trial, in charge of the police, "alla disposizione della Polizia." The condemned have the relief of knowing the exact term of their imprisonment. The accused, although by the law of Naples theoretically innocent, have not the benefit of knowing in how many years they may be tried, and how they may be sentenced; so that imprisonment to them is of indefinite duration. Imprisonment on suspicion is an every-day occurrence, and takes place at the petted, patronized, and, what is more to their

purpose, who are paid by the authorities. I saw a party of the condannati arrived at their place of exile, and presented, by the sbirro. with the formal papers to the local judge Their names having been called over, they were dismissed to find for themselves food and lodging; such prisoners are allowed fourpence a day to provide for themselves subsistence. These men will spend their time according to their habits and their inclinations; but it very frequently indeed occurs, that one of the harder criminals, who does not care at all who suffers so that he effects his own escape, intimates that he can make revelations. He is at once released, and sent to Naples. Some of the better-disposed prisoners, uniting for the consolation of a more congenial society, have been observed to meet together. The rascal is thanked for his news, and set at liberty. Soldiers and ammunition are sent down to break

up the secret societies of the conspirators. The prisons around Naples contain numbers of men belonging to all ranks, who are imprisoned, untried, on political suspicion. Whatever ruffian wishes to remove an obstacle to lust, or avarice, or ambition, has only to send a tale to the authorities, in which his victim figures as "a liberal philosopher." Justice here is a very glutton after garbage; and a hint at dangerous opinions, from the lips of a rogue, will drag an honest man out of his bed. A poor, ignorant man, who had thus unexpectedly been torn from home, and caught in the confusion but a whisper of his crime-Opinions, Opinioni"-said to me, lately, "Sir, I am punished for Pirioni, when I don't so much as know what Pirioni means."

How many men, swept away thus, untried, to the prisons, lie forgotten there, or whether any die away, forgotten and untried, I do not know. I know, however, that a new judge, appointed lately to a small provincial town, did not understand, considered it a matter of is worth 41, d., which is drawn into 2,250 yards them, and ask whether they might not be men who had been imprisoned on accusation, and forgotten? The question was suggestive.

Among the political prisoners are a class called the crociati, people who went to Lom-bardy with crosses on their breasts, to repel of their fellow citizens, and their sovereign's consent. Venice fell; and, with passports, the or \$4,552, which is 75,880 times its original crociati were sent to Pescara; but neither there value. nor at Ancona did they find rest for their feet. An Austrian brig finally escorted them to Naples, where they were distributed among the various places of detention. Numbers of these less so .- Ploughman. crociati went out in the heat and enthusiasm of the greenest youth, and would have revered a cure him decent burial; and this act was stig-

matized as a combination, and set down against

One day I saw, sitting on a rock, a miserable object, grinding his teeth and raving. Two soldiers were approaching, to bind him and take him before a judge. I asked the reason. They replied, "We cannot endure his cursing and his blasphemy." By his dialect, the man appeared to be a Piedmontese. The expression, or rather the no-expression, in his eye and his voice betrayed too clearly what was the matter. "This," I said, "is a case for the hospital, and not for the judge. God has visited him heavily, and to-morrow in like manner may visit you." I found, upon inquiry, that this being, whom every mob hooted and pelted, had been a gentleman in Genoa. When the Governments of Italy were sending all strangers to their respective countries, he had been de-nounced as a Neapolitan, stripped of his proper-ty, and sent to Naples. At Naples, his accent betrayed him to be a Picdmontese, and every Piedmontese was a man to suspect of liberal opinions. He was therefore placed, as possibly dangerous, in charge of the police. He soon became only too harmless, for his mind gave way under his trouble.

The friends of detained prisoners exert themselves to procure their liberation, or the comparative mercy of a trial. I do not know whether authorities are influenced by bribes, but I know well that they take them freely. A poor man was dilating to me upon his wrong the other day, inasmuch as he had sent to an influential character ten ducats worth of cheese and ham, which had been duly taken. while the required favor had not been returned

Little or no attempt is made in the prisons to classify offenders. There is an offence called blasphemy, which is a convenient pouch, into which many curious items of offence are thrust, such as breaking the King's image, refusing to serve in the militia, and entering on portions of common ground which had been allotted in the general disturbance, but never had been cultivated. In the same prison, then, side by side, sharing one fate, are the blasphemer and murderer; that is to say, the man who has destroyed an image of the King of Naples, and structive agencies of conquerors in after years, the man who has destroyed God's image, in the body of his brother.

The best reflection upon facts like these may be conveyed in a scrap of authentic, although possibly somewhat revolutionary, Neapolitan

"Sempronius," says one gentleman, "has an excellent character, but I wonder how he contrives, in these times, to keep himself so clear of difficulty." "Yes," answered his friend, "he is a safe person, for he knows well how to paint a mask." "Ah!" said the first, "that is a great virtue." I broke in upon these revolutionary talkers with the observation that, if they talked sense, society in Naples must be exceedingly corrupt." "Yes," answered one. we cannot afford now to be honest. Society here consists mainly of two classes, hypocrites

and martyrs." Had a spy chanced to hear that speech, my friend would certainly have gone where "blasphemers" are daily sent, to a dungeon.

In 1792, the corner-stone of the present Capitol at Washington was laid. At that time, General Washington, in whose honor the new seat of Government was named, officiated. Fifty-eight years afterward, namely, on the 4th day of July, 1851, the corner-stone of an extension of the buildings was laid, and the Secretaevery-day occurrence, and takes place at the instigation of gentlemen belonging to a licensed which he presented a sketch of the compara-

thirty-one. Then our whole population was three millions, now it is twenty-three. Then Boston had 18,000 people, now it has

137,000. Philadelphia had 42,000, now it has 409,000. New York had 33,000, now it has 515,000. Then our imports were \$21,000,000, now they are \$178.000,000.

Then our exports were \$26,000,000, they are iow \$151.000.000. The area of our territory was then 800,000

guare miles, it is now 3,300,000. Then we had no railroads now we have 3,500 miles of railroads.

Then we had 200 post offices, now we have 21.000. Our revenue from postage then was \$100,000.

now it is \$5,000,000. These are only a few facts to show the rapid growth of the country; and what we and our children have to do to secure the continuance of its prosperity, is to love, fear, and obey the God of our fathers: to avoid intemperance. pride, contention, and greediness of gain, and herish in all our hearts a true patriotism, and just sense of our obligation to those that shall

WATCH-MAKING .- Almost everybody knows what a watch is, and most people understand its use; but, after all, very few are aware of its curious mechanism, nor have they any idea of the number of pieces of which it is composed. It is, in fact, one of the greatest curiosities that human invention ever produced.

Mr. Dent, in a lecture before the London Royal Institute, made an allusion to the formation of a watch, in which he stated that a watch consists of 992 pieces; and stated that 23 trades, and probably 215 persons, are employed in making one of those machines.

The iron of which the balance-spring is formed is valued at something less than a finding in gaol some prisoners whose case he farthing; this produces an ounce of steel, which course to write to the Government, describing of steel wire, and represents in the market 66 dollars.

Still another process of hardening this originally farthing worth of iron, renders it workable into 7,850 balance springs, which will realize, at the common price, 2s. 6d. each, £846 5s., the effect of labor alone. Thus it may be the Austrians, accompanied with the applause seen the mere labor bestowed upon a farthing worth of iron gives it the value of £846 5s.

> Who could believe that the small article be carries in his pocket, to denote the time of day, was the work of 215 persons! Yet it is doubt-

A Good Rule.-The Legislature of Vermont, Government which had restored them gently at its recent session, cuacted a law forbidding to their relatives. I have stood by the deathbed of one of these conspirators, who must men, or switchmen, "who shail make use of have been about fourteen when he took the intoxicating liquors as a beverage." If any cross, and died a political prisoner, crying for his mother. The child's companions clubbed the requirements of the law, they are liable to tues in the possession of the twelve tribes, is a trifle from their miserable allowance, to pro- a prosecution, and a fine of from \$300 to \$3,000.

JERUSALEM, PALESTINE, AND SYRIA.

BY DR. J. V. C. SMITH. Jerusalem is tolerably clean—from its location on a steep side hill, and not because the inhabitants are disposed to keep it in good condition. Filth appertains to Arabs wherever they are. Deep cisterns abound, cut into the solid rock, in which rain water is carefully collected, which is used for all domestic purposes. Water carriers bring some in skins on donkeys from the pool of Siloam, but only few are able or desirous of a supply without the walls. A fine stream is conducted to the city from Beththe stream is conducted to the city from bethehem, winding about the mountains, which is exclusively devoted to the purposes of the celebrated mosque of Omar, on the very plot once occupied by the temple of Solomon.

Wood for fuel is always dear—being sold by which and is windingthe motor of the solution.

weight, and is principally roots of olive trees, brought from a distance on camels. If trees were planted as suggested in this communica-tion, fuel would be abundant and reasonable. No house has a fireplace or chimney. A little charcoal in a copper dish, placed in the centre of a room, is the extent of an attempt at a social fire. At Bishop Gobat's and one other house, stoves were noticed. At Dr. Spaulding's missionary room at Damascus, a regular Boston stove diffused a comfort that could nowhere else be found in the town.

Old as Palestine is, as the residence of civili-

zed man, there is not one decent road, five rods long, in the whole territory. Paths are struck out where there are the fewest stones or the least mud, over any one's field, and through any premises the rider chooses to go. If Herod the Great, whose passion for building magnificent cities was equal to Abba Pasha's in Egypt for creating palaces, had made five miles of good road from Jerusalem towards Jaffa, he would have conferred a blessing on his abused and degraded country. I have roamed over the stupendous ruins which mark the ambition of that energetic but wicked wretch, with feelings that were never called into activity in stepping from one fallen column to another in any province. With all his determined ambition to leave enduring monuments in granite that would withstand the assaults of the elements or the dethe besom of destruction has swept them all, all away, and Cæsarea, the magnificent capital of Judea, has not one human being within its boundaries. The only living thing in sight, where there were the finest specimens of architecture—palaces beyond palaces, and marble, and an exhibition of wealth and refinement, while he was in the meridian of his glory—was one solitary horse, feeding among crushed fragments of sculptured stone, as I passed over the lonely site of a once grand and beautiful

residence or splendid court.

From the days of the Jebusites, whose capital was the present rock on which Jerusalem stands, every successive people who have had possession of Palestine have fixed their habitapossession of raissance have nxed their habita-tions on the very pinnacles of the mountains. Every town and village, therefore, is up some-where. No one resides in a valley. From some hill tops the spectator has an admirable view of many distant places that appear quite near; but to reach any of them he must descend a mile or so, and cross a horrible ravine or yawning gorge, and subsequently wind up and onward like the gyrations of a corkscrew, for ten or twenty hours, to get at the pro-posed settlement. Miles are unheard-of things in Palestine. Everybody speaks of hours who designs a movement. It is seven hours to one place, for example, two to somewhere else, and forty to another. The making of a jaunt through the Holy Land of Syria is an expensive affair indeed. There must be pack mules for carrying beds, food, and all that may be rebody of the most infamous men in Europe; tive condition of our country at the two periods.

Then we had fifteen States, now we have not do well without two; and there must be a cook, a muleteer, a dragoman, who does all the talking and answers all your questions, for the Arabic is difficult to acquire, and, without an interpreter, it is impossible to know where you are, or what you see. Finally, each rider is mounted on a horse, who is followed by a groom, and he must have a mule to carry the provender. All this makes a kind of caravan-a long string of animals, slowly winding up and down the horrible trails of the land single file

> at the rate of two or three miles only an hour. In the course of the day, many places of pecu-liar interest, mentioned in the Old Testament, are distinctly seen, which are not approached. When I stood at Bethel Ramah was in full sight, and the mosque over the tomb of Samuel, the prophet. Both Horan the Upper, and Gideon also, where Joshua took a position when he said, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Ajalon," and other localities of immence interest to the biblical scholar and sacred geographer. At night, it is necessary to seek a stopping place in a village for security. Beyond a town or hamlet, there is not a single habitation.

> All lodge in the same apartment, on the ground, on your own beds, surrounded by armies of insects eager for your blood. Poor things, if it were not for strangers, fleas would soon be extinct, for they seem to despise an Arab, who sleeps sound in defiance of their nippers. Horses, cows, camels, goats, dogs, and the family, are not unfrequently congregated in one room. The night before reaching Damascus, we suffered exceedingly on account of the multitude of lodgers in one room-for the landlord had, in addition to all the beasts and creeping things of Noah's ark. three wives,

> with their restless children. The reason for taking hill tops for towns has reference, in the first place, to scenrity; they can discover the approach of visiters, and, it they don't like them, keep them at bay with the balls always at hand—great stones—which once put in motion, would sweep through all opposition. Secondly, when the winter rains set in. the gorges are filled with angry torrents that gorge out of the side hills, so resting place for a house could be found. An air of desolation reigns everywhere, and every person you meet is armed to the teeth with pis ols, blunderbusses, long guns, dirks, spears,

> down to a simple club. Although an advocate for peace, and almost non-resistant in sentiment, I have been lugging a stout horse pistol all over the country, knowing not what might happen. Had an attack been made upon our train, I am quite sure I should have run, for I have a mortal antipa-

thy to powder. The majority of the inhabitants are idle, and time is of no account. A very few do all the Why, it is the drudgery, and the rest smoke. great pursuit of a long life to smoke. The richer the individual, the better is the quality of his tobacco, and the longer the flexible stem of his nargelch. One everlasting cloud of smoke, the product of more pipes than there are virperpetually rising to the zenith throughout the length and breadth of the Land of Promise.